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***Manner: TRAFFIC***

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During the calendar year 2003, the Medical Examiner's Office participated in the investigation of 179 traffic fatalities. In 2003 there were 112 traffic deaths where the collision occurred in King County compared to 121 in 2002, 142 in 2001 and 124 in 2000. In 2003, 37% (67/179) of the Medical Examiner investigated traffic deaths were the result of collisions occurring outside of King County with the injured transferred to hospitals in the county, primarily Harborview Medical Center. Because death occurred in King County, they came under the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. This is comparable to 40% (82/203) in 2002 and 35% (78/220) in 2001. Although these deaths are classified "accident" for death certification, the preferred term is "motor vehicle collision".

Forty-two percent (76/179) of the traffic fatalities were motor vehicle drivers. Teenage drivers (16-19 years of age) were 14% (11/76) of the driver deaths in 2003 compared to 9% (9/100) in 2002 and 11% (10/93) in 2001. Twenty-six percent of vehicle driver deaths (20/76) were people between the ages of 20 and 29. Four percent of driver deaths (3/76) were adults between the ages of 30 and 39. Male drivers represented 64% (49/76) of driver deaths as compared to 36% for female drivers (27/76).

Of the 179 traffic fatalities in 2003, 37 were passengers representing 21% of the total (37/179). In 2003, teenagers (13-19 years old) accounted for 10 passenger deaths. There was one passenger death of an infant (less than one year of age).

Blood ethanol (alcohol) statistics are presented to describe the role of alcohol in traffic deaths. However, it should be noted that in many cases someone other than the person who died was under the influence of alcohol and directly responsible for the accident. The Medical Examiner determines the blood alcohol levels of persons who die, not of everyone involved in the incident. In addition blood alcohol is not tested in persons who die after surviving more than 24 hours, because in those deaths the alcohol has had time to metabolize<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, blood alcohol figures presented in this report are not a total description of the role of alcohol in traffic collisions. In 39% (19/49) of drivers tested, blood ethanol was present. In 26 vehicle driver deaths, no alcohol determination was performed. Passenger fatalities showed the presence of alcohol in 50% (11/22) of victims tested.

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<sup>1</sup>See "Explanation of Data" for criteria for blood alcohol testing.

Of the 76 vehicle driver deaths, 31 (41%) were known to be wearing restraints. This is comparable to 39% (39/100) in 2002 and 39% (36/93) in 2001. The rest were either not restrained or their restraint use was not known. Of the vehicle drivers who died at the scene of the collision and who tested positive for blood alcohol, 68% (15/22) were either unrestrained or it was unknown whether they were wearing restraints.

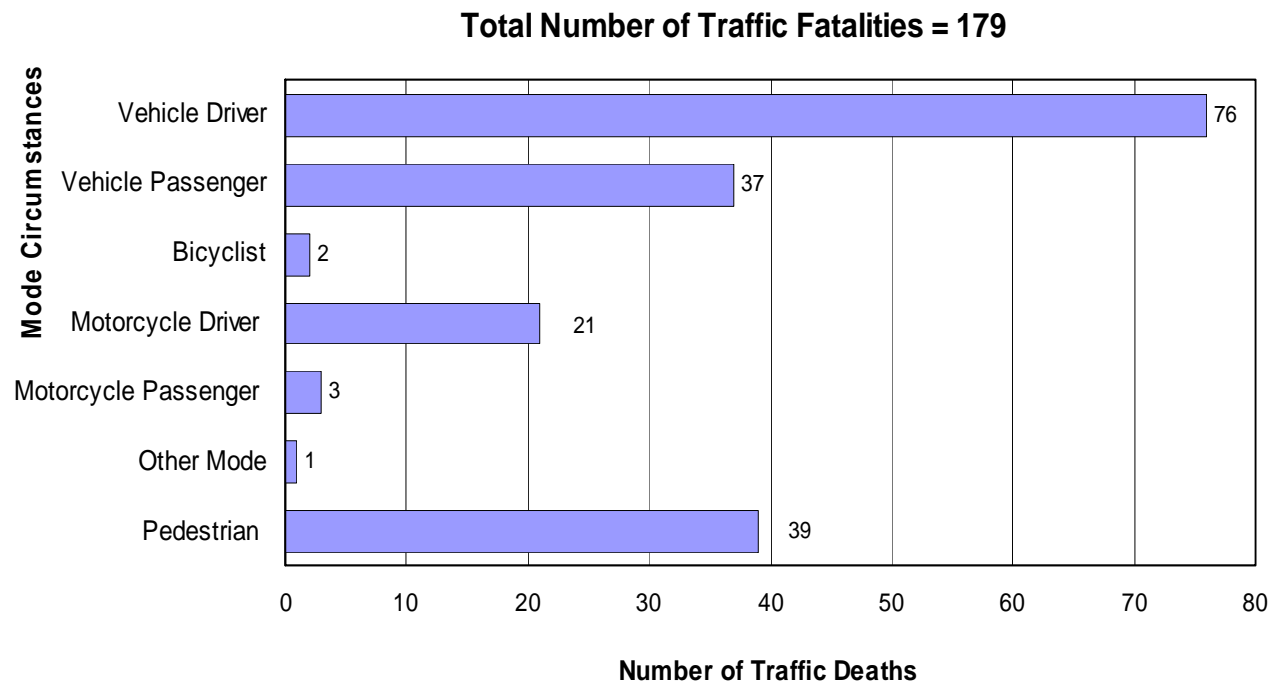
Motorcycle riders accounted for 13% (24/179) of traffic fatalities. In 2003, there were 21 motorcycle driver fatalities and 3 passenger fatalities. All of the motorcycle driver deaths were male. Seventy-five percent (18/24) of motorcycle fatalities were known to be wearing helmets. In six fatalities, the use of a helmet was unknown. Sixteen of the motorcyclist fatalities were tested for the presence of blood alcohol. Six, or 38% (6/16), had a detectable amount of alcohol at the time of autopsy.

Pedestrians constituted 22% (39/179) of traffic fatalities. The majority of pedestrian deaths were male 59% (23/39). Of the pedestrian fatalities that were tested, 21% (6/29) had detectable amounts of alcohol present in their blood at the time of death.

There were two (2) bicyclist deaths in 2003. One (1) rider was wearing a helmet and in one (1) death, this information was indicated as unknown.

Graph 7-1

## Traffic Fatality Circumstances in 2003



**Table 7-1 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Race of the Decedent**

CIRCUMSTANCES / GENDER	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER		
Vehicle Driver	63	5	6	2	0		76
<i>Male</i>	41	3	4	1	0	49	
<i>Female</i>	22	2	2	1	0	27	
Vehicle Passenger	31	1	3	1	1		37
<i>Male</i>	19	1	0	1	0	21	
<i>Female</i>	12	0	3	0	1	16	
Bicycle	2	0	0	0	0		2
<i>Male</i>	2	0	0	0	0	2	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle Driver	18	1	1	0	1		21
<i>Male</i>	18	1	1	0	1	21	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle Passenger	3	0	0	0	0		3
<i>Male</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Female</i>	2	0	0	0	0	2	
Other Mode	1	0	0	0	0		1
<i>Male</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pedestrian	31	2	5	1	0		39
<i>Male</i>	19	2	1	1	0	23	
<i>Female</i>	12	0	4	0	0	16	
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>179</b>
Percent	83%	5%	9%	2%	1%		

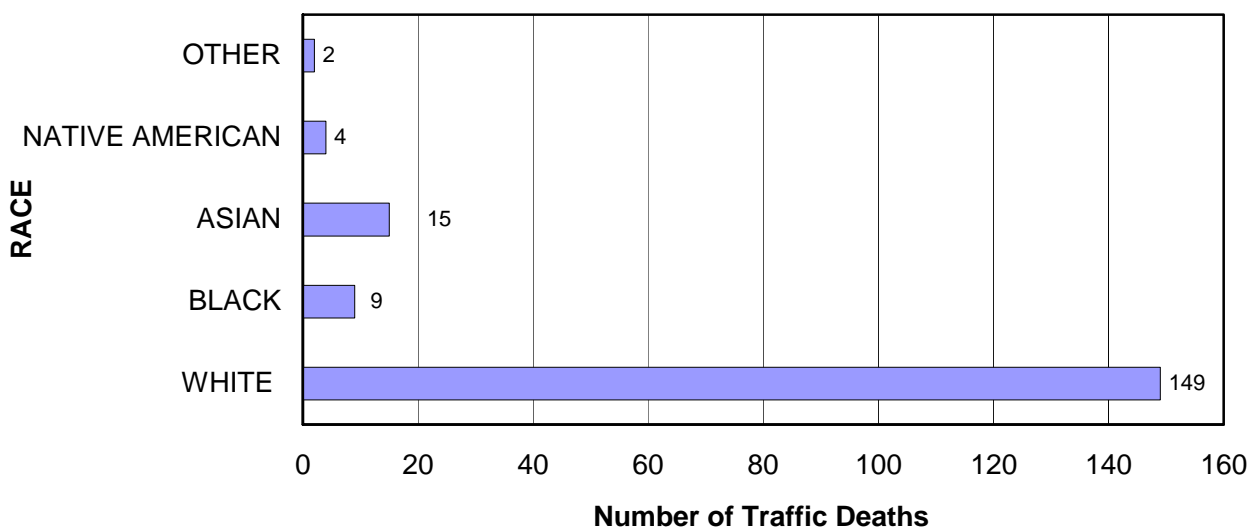
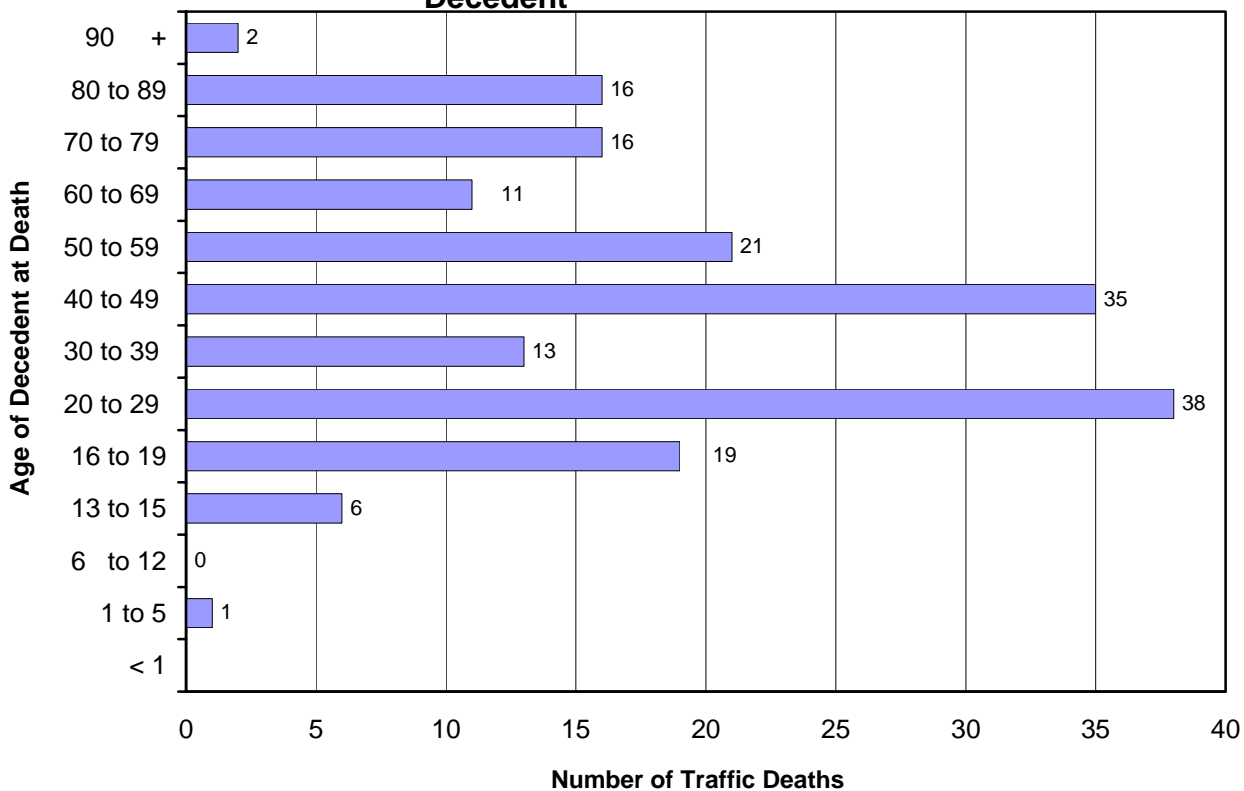
**Graph 7-2 Traffic Fatalities and Race of the Decedent****Graph 7-3 Traffic Fatalities and Age Group of the Decedent**

Table 7-2 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Age Group of the Decedent

Circumstances / Gender	AGE GROUP (YEARS)													SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	< 1	1 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 to 89	90 +		
Vehicle Driver	0	0	0	1	11	20	3	12	7	4	9	8	1		76
Male	0	0	0	0	9	12	3	10	3	2	7	3	0	49	
Female	0	0	0	1	2	8	0	2	4	2	2	5	1	27	
Vehicle Passenger	1	0	0	4	6	10	2	0	3	3	3	4	1		37
Male	1	0	0	3	4	9	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	21	
Female	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	3	2	3	2	1	16	
Bicyclist	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0		2
Male	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle Driver	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	8	1	2	0	1	0		21
Male	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	8	1	2	0	1	0	21	
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0		3
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	
Other Mode	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1
Male	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pedestrian	0	1	0	0	1	3	4	14	7	2	4	3	0		39
Male	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	9	3	0	1	2	0	23	
Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	4	2	3	1	0	16	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>179</b>
<b>Percent</b>	1%	1%	0%	3%	11%	21%	7%	19%	12%	6%	9%	9%	1%		

**Table 7-3 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Gender of the Decedent**

CIRCUMSTANCES	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Vehicle Driver	49	27	76
Vehicle Passenger	21	16	37
Bicyclist	2	0	2
Motorcycle Driver	21	0	21
Motorcycle Passenger	1	2	3
Other Mode	1	0	1
Pedestrian	23	16	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>179</b>
Percent	66%	34%	

**Table 7-4 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Use of Restraint/Helmet <sup>2</sup>**

CIRCUMSTANCES				TOTAL
	Used Safety Device	No Safety Device Used	Unknown	
Vehicle Driver	31	18	27	76
Vehicle Passenger	17	8	12	37
Bicyclist	1	0	1	2
Motorcycle Driver	16	0	5	21
Motorcycle Passenger	2	0	1	3
Other Mode	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>140</b>
Percent	48%	19%	33%	

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<sup>2</sup> Excludes Pedestrian Deaths

**Table 7-5 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Blood Alcohol Test Results**

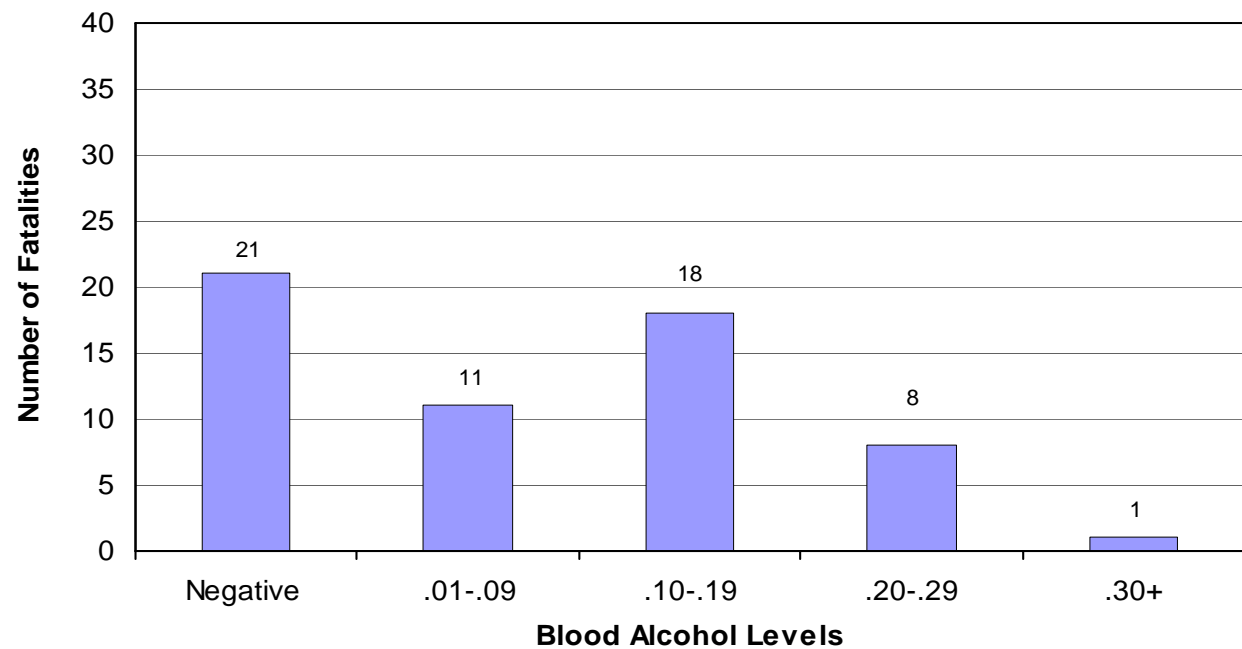
CIRCUMSTANCES	TESTED		NOT TESTED	TOTAL
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE		
Vehicle Driver	19	31	26	76
Vehicle Passenger	11	11	15	37
Bicyclist	1	1	0	2
Motorcycle Driver	5	10	6	21
Motorcycle Passenger	1	0	2	3
Other Mode	0	1	0	1
Pedestrian	6	23	10	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>179</b>
Percent	24%	43%	33%	

**Table 7-6 Blood Alcohol Levels of Traffic Fatalities who DIED AT THE SCENE of the Accident**

CIRCUMSTANCES	BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL (G%)					TOTAL
	NONE	.01-.09	.10-.19	.20-.29	.30+	
Vehicle Driver	10	2	5	5	0	22
Vehicle Passenger	1	2	10	1	0	14
Bicyclist	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycle Driver	1	1	2	1	0	5
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	1	0	0	1
Pedestrian	9	1	0	1	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>54</b>
Percent	39%	11%	33%	15%	2%	



**Graph 7-4**                      **Blood Alcohol Levels of Traffic Fatalities who  
DIED AT THE SCENE of the Accident**



**Table 7-7 Time of Fatal Traffic Incident**

TIME OF DAY	TOTAL	PERCENT
12:01 AM - 3:00 AM	39	22%
3:01 AM - 6:00 AM	3	2%
6:01 AM - 9:00 AM	7	4%
9:01 AM - Noon	19	10%
12:01 PM - 3:00 PM	28	16%
3:01 PM - 6:00 PM	25	14%
6:01 PM - 9:00 PM	29	16%
9:01 PM -Midnight	27	15%
Unknown	2	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>179</b>	

**Graph 7-5 Time of Fatal Traffic Incident**